



**STATE SENATOR NAN RICH
LEGISLATIVE UPDATE
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FLORIDA'S TEACHER OF THE YEAR IS A RAY OF HOPE IN A BLEAK TIMES

These days, it can be difficult to find things that make us smile. This is especially true in government and public service. Congress' handling of the debt ceiling crisis was dismal and embarrassing, as a handful of ideologues managed to turn a routine issue – which has been voted on without incident for decades – into a weapon to hold our nation's economy hostage. The fallout sent Wall Street on a dizzying rollercoaster ride that, along with the stumbling of economies around the globe, has left even the savviest investors reeling.

Meanwhile, back in the real world, ordinary Americans worry about paying their bills each month, hanging on to their homes and finding jobs. Florida's unemployment rate remains above 10 percent (the fourth worst in the country). And, while the governor has availed himself of the low-cost health insurance coverage offered to all state employees, he continues to turn away millions of dollars in federal health and human services funding as part of his crusade against the federal health care reform act. It's enough to discourage even the most dedicated legislator.

Certainly I've felt that way lately. But then something happens that reminds me of why I decided to run for office in the first place. Recently, I met someone who inspired me, and reminded me that there are good people working hard every day to help others. A few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to attend a ceremony in honor of Alvin Davis, a teacher and Band Director at Miramar High School, who was named the Florida Department of Education/Macy's 2012 Teacher of the Year for the state of Florida.

Mr. Davis is a fine music teacher, but he also is a mentor to his students. He focuses on academics, discipline and musicality to motivate his students to excel in band performance, in the classroom and in life. He genuinely cares about his students, and takes time to get to know

them. Every band member receives one-on-one counseling with a member of the band staff, and Mr. Davis personally sits down with each student to review their report cards and interim reports.

As a result of Mr. Davis's hard work, positive energy and personal attention, for the last three years in a row, every single one of his students who was a regular participating member of the band has been accepted to college or post-secondary education program. This is a remarkable accomplishment, and shows just how great an impact that one dedicated teacher can have on the lives of so many students.

Not surprisingly, Mr. Davis has earned a host of accolades and awards in recognition of his outstanding work as an educator. That's as it should be – his efforts are worthy of honor, although I'm sure for Mr. Davis, the success of his students is the greatest reward he could receive. At the same time, though, it is important to remember that while Mr. Davis stands out as an excellent teacher, I'm sure there are plenty of teachers whose names we've never heard who are just like him, who work just as hard as he does, and who have just as great an impact on their students' lives.

And that's something some of my colleagues in the Florida Legislature need to remember when they make public policy decisions about education. They need to remember that there are many teachers like Alvin Davis in our state, who do an outstanding job of educating Florida's children and preparing them for life. They need to remember that children are not widgets, schools are not factories, and teachers are not machines – they cannot be properly evaluated with a single standardized test.

In the coming year, Alvin Davis will serve as the Christa McAuliffe Ambassador for Education in Florida. He will visit schools throughout our state, to engage educators, parents and students in a dialogue about the educational opportunities and challenges in our state. I know that Mr. Davis will spend time in Tallahassee this spring, and I hope my colleagues in the legislature can meet him, and see for themselves the passion, commitment and excellence he brings to the profession of education. I'm sure they'll be just as inspired by him as I am, and be reminded of how important it is for us to show appreciation for Florida's teachers.

As always, I appreciate the opportunity to serve as your State Senator, and I welcome your comments and questions on any issue related to Florida government. Please feel free to contact my office at (954) 747-7933 or email at rich.nan.web@flsenate.gov.